

>> any sightseeing?' I looked at him and said, 'No sir, I'm kind of here to work. However, I noticed as I was passing through that I passed signs for Gettysburg. If I have time on my way home, I'm going to stop by and see the battlefield.' Well, it turns out, Capt. O'Sullivan was a big Civil War historian. He talked to me about the Civil War for two straight hours. Now, we didn't sit there on the buckets for two hours, we walked around. And interspersed with that he was telling me stories about some of his guys who had been killed. He kind of weaved in and out of that. He was one who made me think, this is a guy who just needed to talk to somebody. Maybe it even helped that I was from somewhere else and I wouldn't be seeing him everyday.

When he retired the next year, he sent me these letters. And what was really cool was — you know, police, we're such geeks. We trade patches. Well, he gave me fire department patches. But, he sent me the ones he took off his uniform. That meant more to me, that he took them off his uniform.

What was the attitude of the people you met? Did you see the grief in them or were people just working and trying to get the job done?

I didn't see much grief. I saw more anger than I did grief. At that time, too, there was still the possibility something else could happen. There would always be rumors that they were going to attack something again while all the workers were there, just to further demoralize America. But you'd look up occasionally and see an F16 fly over, and boy it just made you feel good.

I did have people who would cry when they would tell me how they wished I had seen the World Trade Center before and how beautiful it was. They were so proud of their city that they hated for a visitor to come in and see it like this. It bothered them that much.

When you arrived there to work, did anyone give you a time frame for how long you would be needed?

No, it was open ended. The head of the critical incident stress team would basically be assessing you the whole time. First of all, were you effective? Word would get around. You would work a six-hour shift at the site, then you would go back to the Critical Incident Stress Center in Jersey City and they would assess you. 'Are you OK?' Because, as crazy as it sounds, if you just sit and listen, if somebody just dumps on you all day long, it just wears you down. After awhile, you're taking it all in and you're not getting it out. You'd sit, get something to eat, something to drink, and if you needed to talk to somebody, there was somebody there to talk to. Then you go back and work six more. Then you came back again. And when you came back from that six, if you could talk them into it, you worked another

six. That's what all of us tried to do. So, whenever you were walking through the door, no matter how you felt or looked after that second six-hour shift, you're like, 'Hey! Everything's great, man! Good to see you, what's happening, buddy? Yeah, I'm good to go back, no problem.'

There was only one night Roland (Kandle) wouldn't let me go back. It was like the fifth night or something. I was really tired. He made me go sleep a little bit. But, we would try to pull off 18 hours, go back, sleep, set your alarm and get back in the morning. I never had problems doing it because I always had people who needed a ride. I needed to be the one to drive them if they were out of vehicles. I could pull off the three shifts. I tried to do that every day. That does start to wear on you as the days go on, but you think, I'm only up here for a certain amount of time. I just couldn't imagine working two of those

► The threads still stitched to the patch, Welsh admired a gift he received from a New York City fireman whom he befriended at Ground Zero. The gift was especially poignant for Welsh because the fireman removed the patches from his own, weathered uniform following his retirement, shortly after the terrorist attacks.

